Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat *Inc* *March 2001*



From
Flora of Vic,
Vol I,
By Forenan and Walsh.

FERDINAND MUELLER,
he gave us the blackberry,
beautiful fruit,
terrible weed!

DIARY DATES

Fri 2nd Mar *AGM and Members' Night - "Trees"*
Sun 4th Mar *Excursion, Rail Trail, Smythesdale - Skipton.* To be led by club members.
Thur 8th Mar, *Duck Rescue,* Duck shooting commences March 17th, If you want to help rescue our precious native waterbirds, information meeting of the Coalition Against Duck Shooting, 7pm at the Horticulture Centre at 7pm. Enq .
9th - 12th Mar. *VFNCA AGM and Camp-out, Latrobe Valley - Rawson Village, Walhalla.*
Wed 14th Mar *FNCB Web Page set up.* Compliments of the Courier, 11am, Courier Office, BDA, JEG and CH attending, room for others but please let BDA know so that Courier can be notified, so as allowance can be made for catering.
Wed 14th Mar *APS, Talk by Neil Marriott,* 7-30pm Ballarat Horticulture Centre
Sun Mar 17th *St Patrick's Day* - Prime time for picking blackberries, but make certain they haven't been sprayed!
Sun Mar 17th *Landfest.* Creswick LCC, 10am to 4pm
Tues Mar 20th. *Excursion, Spargo Creek Mineral Spring Reserve, then Werribee River Picnic Ground, Bunding - Blakeville Rd.* Depart Creswick Plaza at 4.00pm. Free fizzy drinks at Spargo creek, bring bottle(s), then picnic tea at Werribee River PG. This area is recognized habitat of the greater glider, so bring a torch because we will be staying after dark for a spotlighting walk. Leader Brian Andrews.
Tues 27th Mar. *Committee Meeting.* Claire's, , 7.30pm.
Fri 6th April. *Meeting - What Rock is That?* Speaker Carol Hall, club member.
Sun 8th April. *Excursion - Geological.* Leader Carol Hall.

FEBRUARY MEETING POINTS

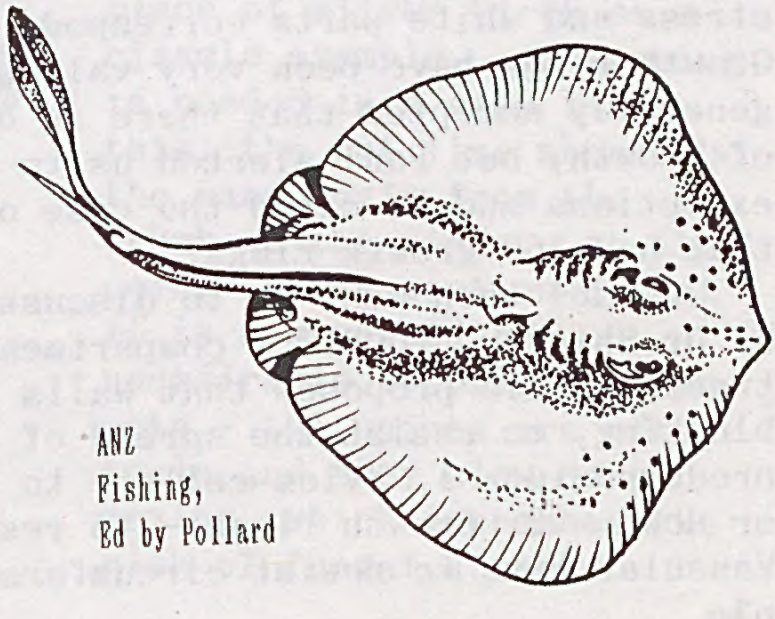
*1 Application to be made to the Lance Riechstein Foundation for funding to help finance the club's proposed booklet. Suggestion from Nick Jaschenko, DNRE. *2 Sherryl Garbutt, State Environment and Conservation Minister, approved in principle proposal to obtain extra land for Clunes Swamps - but no money available. *3 Suggested by Lyndsay Fink that a woolemi pine be purchased and planted in the Botanic Garden, the club will provide a brass plaque ($150). *4 Development of Resort on what is currently Creswick Golf Club. Concern over possible rezoning and acquisition of crown land to the south (currently hardwood production) and to the east (currently Regional Park). Shire of Hepburn has a planning scheme amendment which proposes to change both zonings to enable

Tradelink to pursue its favoured option, including construction of fairways through bushland. FNCB decided to oppose rezoning of south, but would withdraw objection if exchange of greater value was achieved and approved by DNRE. FNCB decided to oppose rezoning of eastern section. Doubts expressed concerning the Council's legal right to rezone the land at this stage. Delegation of members - GB, JEG, D McD, JM and BDA to discuss matter with Hepburn Shire Council, at Daylesford, on Monday 5th Feb. Club members invited to have a group inspection of the land in question on Thursday 8th at 5pm.

FIELD REPORTS

Three visits from 1 adult and 2 young tawny frogmouths, 15th Jan, Mt Helen. Peregrine falcon, 20th Jan, Eyre, SA. Kangaroo in Victoria Park, 1st Feb. John Mildren. // Blue-billed duck chicks on west side of isthmus, 4 great crested grebe chicks between there and St Pat's Point, Lake Wendouree, 3rd, Eileen Anderson. // "Snake living around our dam", Dec/Jan, 2 yellow tailed black cockatoos, 1st Feb, Mt Egerton, Paul Norquay. // Spotted pardalote at bird bath, (first time in 24 years), late Jan, Mt Helen, Frank Harrap. // Large spreads of alpine mint bush and silver snow daisy. Small but dense mats of fairie's aprons. A white-lipped snake. Lots of flame robins, and an Australian hobby. Also a starfish fungus *Aseroe rubra*, 6th - 13th Jan, Falls Creek, photographs from trip put on display, Carol Hall. // Baillon's crake in Lake Lodge pond also several clutches of great crested grebe chicks, Jan, Lake Wendouree, John Gregurke. // Kangaroo hopping along nearby street, Jan, Eureka Pool, Joan Riddell. // Kingfisher, Jan, St George's Lake, Jan, Val Hocking. // Hooked two European carp on two hooks, on fishing line at same time. Also observed rufous whistler, friarbirds and kingfishers, Dec/Jan, Colignan, Tony Johns.

Two stingrays, 1.5m across flaps, Queenscliff Jetty. A pod of 6 dolphins with 2 young about 1m long, swimming beside fishing boat, rip, 26th Jan, Kevin Andrews. // Brushtail possum in roof, urgent plea for a nestbox, Maureen Christie. // Stone platform removed from McLaughlin Lookout, Wombat Forest, 30th Jan, Pat Murphy.

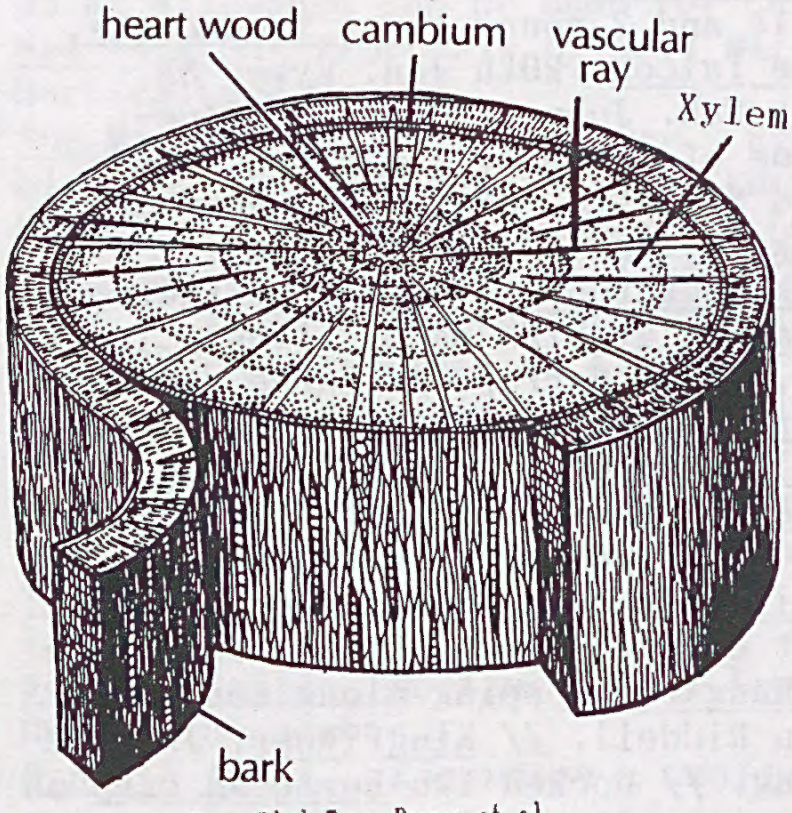


ANZ Fishing, Ed by Pollard

TREE PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Club Member Paul Norquay started his talk by stating that woody plants have several defence mechanisms, and then asked the question - "why?" The audience was quick to respond with suggestions including :- insects, fungi, weather extremes, moss, lichen, mistletoe etc. With that established Paul then made the point that when animal tissue is damaged it usually is able to be repaired and regrow, but by contrast trees can't do that.

To progress further it was suggested that we revise some theory, most of which, most of us had learned in biology at school, and since then we had mostly forgotten.



From Biol Two, Evans et al

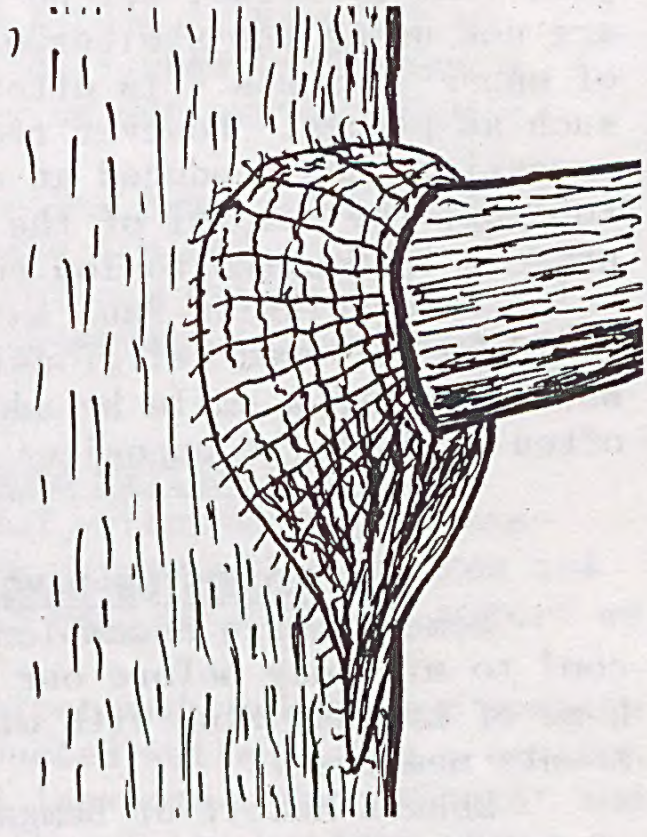
Using a diagram like the one opposite he explained and discussed the following:- Phloem (bark), Plant tissue responsible for conducting sugars and other organic compounds between different parts of a plant. Xylem tissue, tissue responsible for the transport of water and minerals from the soil to the leaves. Cambium layer where new phloem and xylem cells are produced. Central heartwood, which has no living cells. Vascular rays which act as food storage sites. Finally growth rings, the dark parts correspond to times of stress and white parts correspond to times of rapid growth. Growth rings have been very valuable in dating trees and it is generally accepted that there is one growth ring for every year of growth, but Paul alerted us to the fact that there are exceptions and he cited the case of a 90 year old cypress tree that had 360 growth rings!

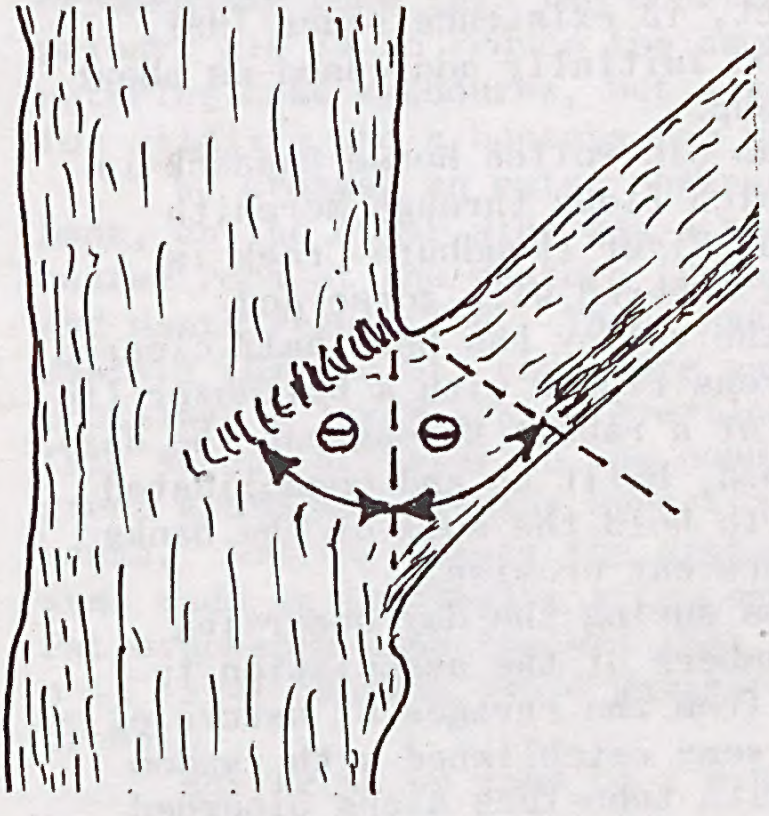
Paul then went on to discuss the CODIT theory, proposed by Dr Shieger, (CODIT = compartmentalization of decay in trees). This proposes that walls can be established by blocking, to resist the spread of pathogens. The walls are produced in:- 1. Xylem cells - to resist spread of pathogens up or down. 2. Growth rings - to resist inward spread. 3. Vascular rays to resist circumferential spread. 4. Barrier

zones to prevent outward spread into new wood. Apparently barrier zones always work and are composed of extremely hard wood. Paul told the story of how he was drilling through wood with no trouble at all - until the drill bit hit a barrier zone, and then drilling was almost impossible!

We then moved on to the subject of branches falling off. With a slide of a 70m mountain ash, branchless for most of its height, I was expecting an explanation of how this occurs, but instead we were asked to explain why branches tend not to fall off.

When it was obvious that we didn't know, Paul explained that branches have trunk collars, as shown opposite. If pruning needs to be done, the cut should be made just outside the collar. People obsessed with neatness tend to make the cut as close to the trunk as possible, cutting the collar and letting in pathogens. It was also pointed out that if you want to split wood, you should aim the axe to one side of the exiting branch - that's far easier than trying to chop through it!





Often trunk collars are not evident but branch-bark ridges are, as shown opposite. We were shown a piece of silver birch as a classic example. If pruning is needed in a case like this, the cut line should be the same angle from the trunk as the ridge. At this point it was mentioned that it is now considered undesirable to paint pruning cuts - the paints are often toxic and they slow down drying, which increases the risk of fungal attack.

Good pruning usually results in 'doughnuts' - smooth rings of tissue surrounding the pruned branch, and no sign of pathogen entry.

We then looked at some practices involving pruning. Coppicing is the extreme example, a tree is cut down and the stump is left behind. Regrowths occur from the stump, providing convenient regeneration, but they are poor quality, curved at the base and often affected by fungi, white ants etc, OK if you just want firewood, but no good if you want sawlogs - foresters are now using the shelterbelt system. Pollarding - the removal of upper branches - is often considered beneficial with trees such as planes. However recent pollarding in Ballarat for new powerlines has produced an angry response from residents. Lopping, the removal of the top of the tree is also no good. A project in Bendigo to lop eucalypts resulted in total failure.

In conclusion Paul said that " all of the previous advice would be followed religiously by any good arboriculturist"... but then with a smile he added "but any good naturalist would often do just the opposite! You can work out why, can't you!"

Brian Andrews

EXCURSION-BAMGANIE-MEREDITH LANDCARE

Some members assembled at Creswick Plaza initially on a cool to mild day before our convoy rendezvoused at the Meredith home of Lyndsay Fink with other members - making a total of twenty members .

Robert McColl of Bamganie Landcare Group - an association of land holders in this district, in existence since 1991, concerned about land degradation initially addressed us about the aims and agenda of this group.

Our first stop was atop an old Police Horse Paddock in the valley of Woodburn Creek which flows through Meredith eventually joining the Moorabool River (Woodburn Creek is spring fed.) This location was covered with gorse and blackberries formerly but now the valley has been half cleared of the gorse cover, rabbit warrens ripped with a bulldozer (to my knowledge there was no sign of a rabbit throughout the day) and the banks of the creek firmed, built up and consolidated and two thousand trees planted to hold the soil of the banks hopefully when established to prevent erosion.

We made many further stops during the day observing similar means taken by other members of the association to improve and stabilize the land from the ravages of nature eg windbreaks, much tree planting some established with random broadcasting of seed and some with tubestock along ploughed

furrows.

Intermittent rain was falling as we arrived at Robert's wool shed for our lunch break. Peter Billing was tempted to give a rendition of "Click Go The Shears" in the shearing shed as we ate our lunch but stalled at the last moment when he realized the predicament we would be in if he lifted the roof of the shearing shed off! Instead we were all fascinated to watch through a window as a jackeroo and his sheepdog (a border collie) moved a flock of sheep through yards adjacent to the shearing shed - what an alert, intelligent and responsive animal a sheep dog is!

On our cross country jaunt to return to Meredith we paused at a gateway and we were all delighted to observe a koala in a gum tree pensively surveying our convoy below - first spotted by Fran Hanrahan.

Gail Whyte distributed firm yellow home grown tomatoes (a novelty to me at least) but tasty like its red cousin - I can vouch for this. From Meredith we went our separate ways all pleased to know about the work of conservation being undertaken by our country kith and kin.

Tony Johns

THE NEW NORTH GARDENS WETLAND

Del and Kevin arrived early and witnessed the awesome spectacle of a large branch breaking off an old swamp gum and come crashing to the ground, just as well it happened before we were standing beneath it.

We parked near the picnic shelter and walked over towards the western end of the newly constructed wetland. On a section of clear ground there were about 15 lapwings. Much thought and expense has gone into the construction of the wetland, the primary aim is to reduce the amount of rubbish and sediment entering Lake Wendouree, but also it will obviously be a haven for wildlife and a bonanza for naturalists.

We crossed an outer channel and then climbed a steep bank, on the other side was a shallow lagoon with an arc of coarse rock at the eastern (Lake Wendouree) end, there for flow and depth regulation. There was a deep pond, and at the western (Gilles St) end there was another deep pond which contained a large grated overflow pipe. There was already a fair amount of water in the ponds and Claire pointed out that green grass was already sprouting up in the moist soil of the banks. Looking across the system the remaining large swamp gums made an impressive site, and will be good habitat trees. Pat expressed some concern that the extensive earthworks and soil level changes could damage and possibly kill many of the trees.

Moving on we came to a bank which had been covered with

felt carpet underlay and planted with tussock grass *poa sp* and another native grass. Underlay makes a perfect mulch mat, it biodegrades by the time that the plants become established and for scroungers like me there is usually someone trying to get rid of some.

As we approached the pond at the eastern end a flock of about 50 white ibis flew up and away, they have obviously wasted no time in colonizing the area. The pond has an island in the middle which is covered with new green growth, at first I thought some native trees had been planted but Helen Young-Harvey was quick to point out that the leaves were of European trees and probably just regrowth from the trees originally in that spot. Finally there was a pipe for taking the water under the road and into Lake Wendouree.

We were all favourably impressed by the project. We are looking forward to seeing it in operation, fully planted --- and full of wildlife!

Brian Andrews

FEBRUARY POSER...BACKYARD HOLIDAY

In case you are still wondering, the pictures from L to right were spitfires (sawfly larvae), eggs of the golden-eye lacewing *Chrysopa sp* and the face of a huntsman spider. BDA

MARCH POSER...NATURAL JOKES

I thought it was time that some of the jokes that members have come out with were put into print, see if you can remember the answers or work them out :-

J1. Why did the baby snake ask its mother if they were a poisonous species?

J2. Why did the psychiatrist keep his wife under the bed?

J3. What do you call a deer with no eyes?

J4. Why are echidnas so healthy?

J5. Why was Ken Mc Donnell so keen to drink the radioactive springwater at Lyonville?

J6. Why are days longer in the summer? BDA

---------***---------- FNCB ----------***---------

Meetings are held at the Ballarat Horticulture Centre, corner of Gregory and Gillies Streets, ie. the NW corner of the Botanic Gardens, VICROADS 254 F8, commencing at 7-30pm

Excursions depart from Creswick Plaza, VICROADS 255 M10, at 9-30 am, unless specified otherwise.

Committee; Claire Dalman (President).. , Greg Binns (Vice President).. , John Gregurke (Secretary).. , Bob Curtain (Treasurer).. , Brian Andrews (Editor).. , Helen Burgess, Maureen Christie, Lyndsay Fink, Carol Hall, John Mildren, Pat Murphy.

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